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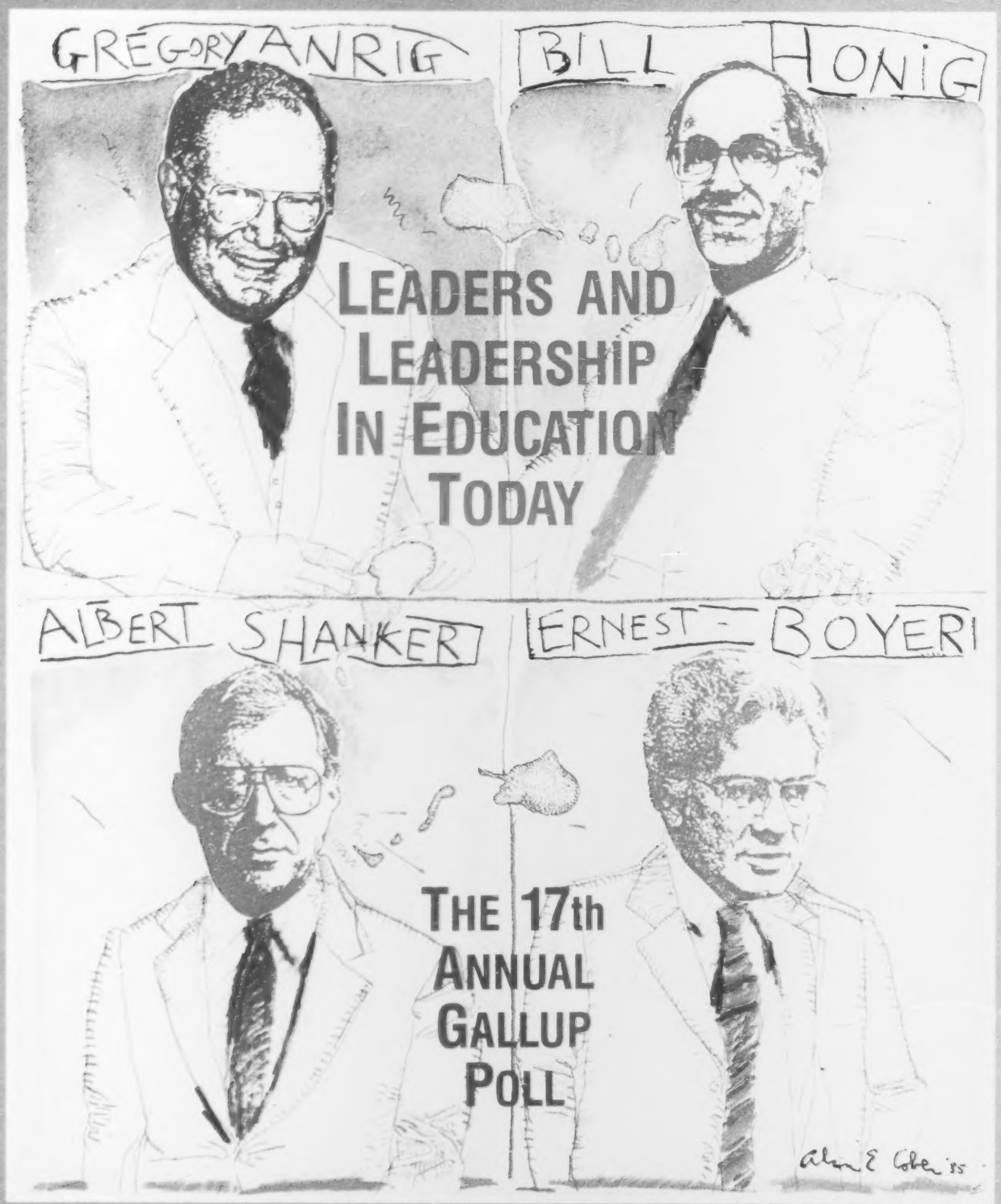

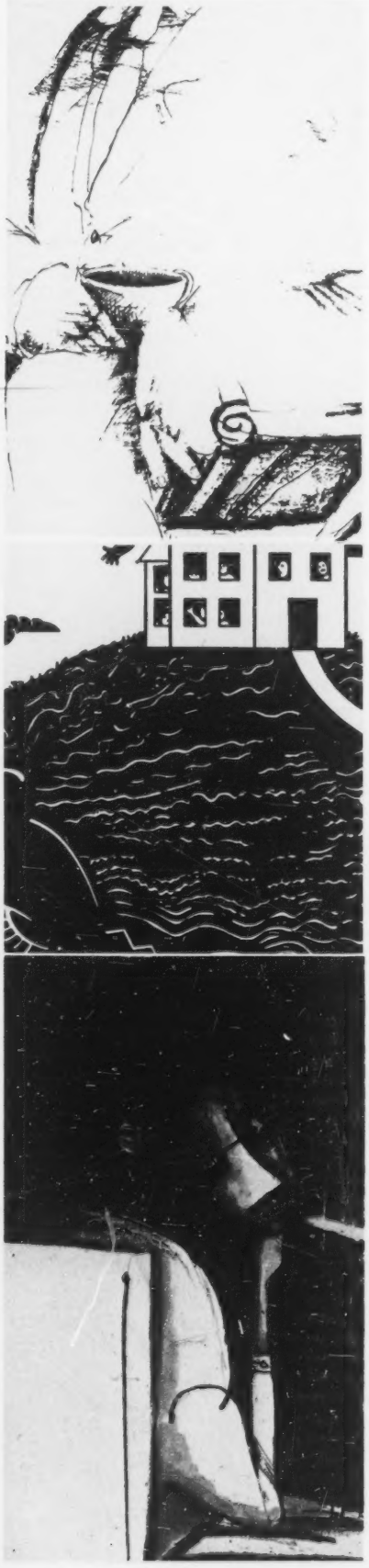

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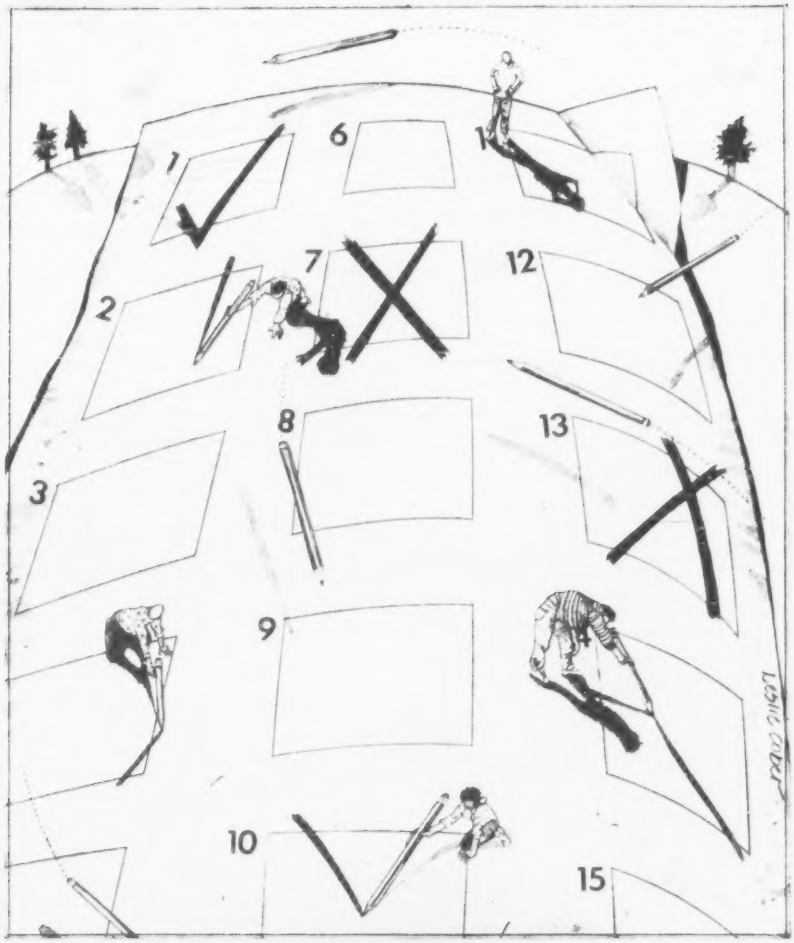


THE 17TH ANNUAL GALLUP POLL of the public's attitudes toward the public schools

by Alec M. Gallup

The annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, now financed by Phi Delta Kappa, is intended to be a continuing source of reliable information concerning trends in opinion about significant school questions. For school officials, the poll is valuable in at least two ways: it alerts decision makers to overall public reaction to a variety of school programs and policies, and it serves as a national benchmark against which local attitudes can be measured.

Local officials are welcome to use questions asked in the Gallup education surveys. The questions are not copyrighted. Moreover, no limits are placed on the use of information contained in these reports, beyond customary credit

Illustration by Leslie Cober

to the source and observance of the canons of accuracy and completeness of quotation.

Phi Delta Kappa's Dissemination Division, assisted by the Gallup Organization, is prepared to help school districts and other agencies survey local populations on education questions. For details of this service, called PACE (Polling Attitudes of the Community on Education), write or telephone Wilmer Bugher, associate executive secretary for administration, Phi Delta Kappa, PO. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. The phone number is 812/339-1156.

1985 Rating of the Public Schools

The public rates the public schools as favorably in 1985 as it rated them in 1984, when the schools achieved the highest grades for performance in a decade.

This year, 43% of those interviewed gave the public schools in their communities a grade of A or B — a figure statistically equal to the 42% who gave their local public schools a grade of A or B last year. The 1984 ratings were up sharply over 1983, when only 31% of respondents gave their local public schools a grade of A or B.

Three respondents in 10 this year said that their local schools deserve a grade of C. Only 14% said that the public schools in their communities deserve a grade of D or FAIL.

As has always been the case, those individuals most closely in touch with the public schools tended again in 1985 to perceive the local public schools more favorably. Among respondents with children attending public schools, 52% gave the public schools in their communities a grade of A or B. Among respondents with no children in school, only 39% gave the local public schools a grade of A or B.

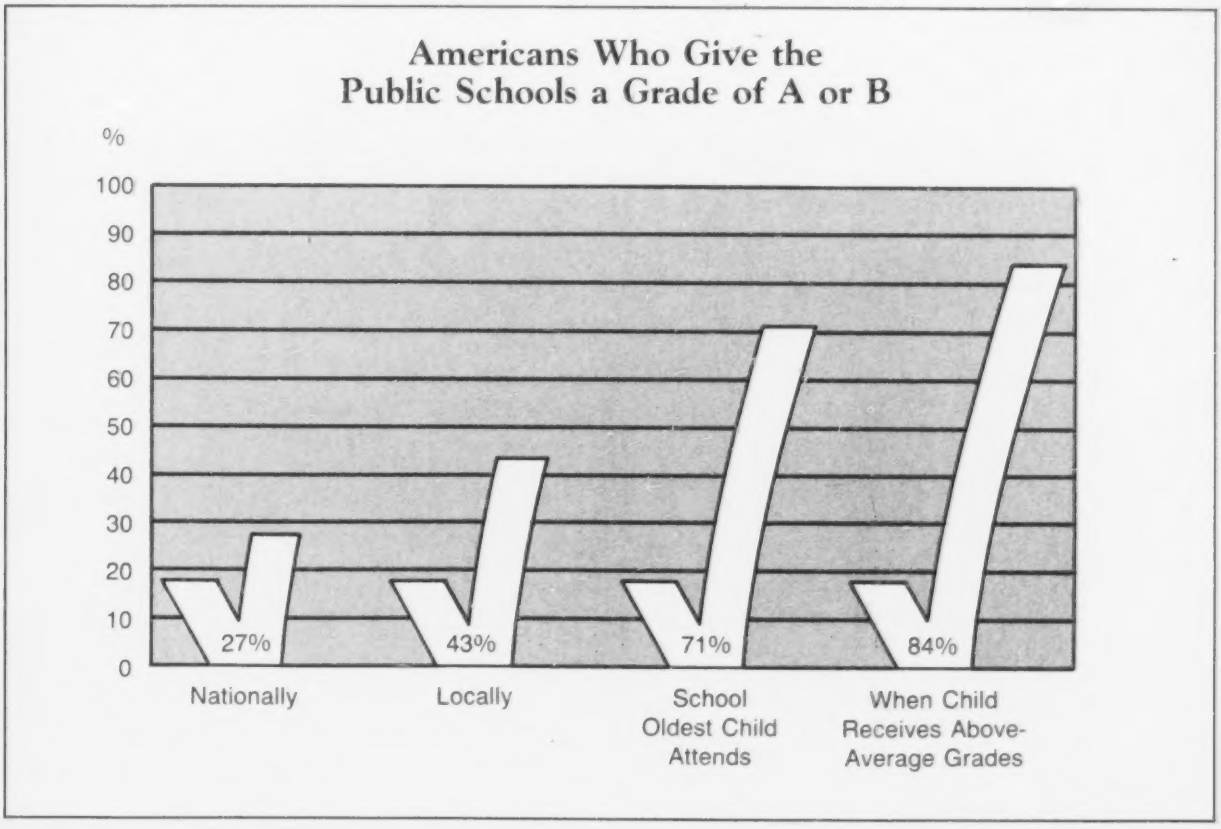
The question:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A	9	9	8	4
B	34	30	44	29
C	30	30	33	31
D	10	10	9	23
FAIL	4	4	4	7
Don't know	13	17	2	6

Ratings Given The Local Public Schools	National Totals								
	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %	1980 %	1979 %	1978 %	1977 %
A	9	10	6	8	9	10	8	9	11
B	34	32	25	29	27	25	26	27	26
C	30	35	32	33	34	29	30	30	28
D	10	11	13	14	13	12	11	11	11
FAIL	4	4	7	5	7	6	7	8	5
Don't know	13	8	17	11	10	18	18	15	19

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**9**	**34**	**30**	**10**	**4**	**13**
Sex						
Men	8	33	32	11	3	13
Women	10	34	29	10	5	12
Race						
White	9	34	30	10	4	13
Nonwhite	7	35	32	10	8	8



Charts by Mary Miller

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
Age						
18 - 29 years	5	27	33	15	5	15
30 - 49 years	7	39	32	9	5	8
50 and over	14	32	27	9	3	15
Education						
College	9	33	29	11	5	13
High school	8	34	32	10	5	11
Grade school	14	30	26	8	4	18
Income						
$40,000 and over	9	39	30	12	4	6
$30,000 - $39,999	8	39	32	7	4	10
$20,000 - $29,999	8	34	34	9	4	11
$10,000 - $19,999	8	32	29	13	5	13
Under $10,000	12	26	27	10	4	21
Community Size						
1 million and over	8	28	29	13	8	14
500,000 - 999,999	13	30	37	10	*	10
50,000 - 499,999	8	36	29	11	3	13
2,500 - 49,999	11	41	30	10	1	7
Under 2,500	10	37	32	6	2	13
Central city	6	27	33	14	8	12
Region						
East	7	34	28	12	5	14
Midwest	12	38	30	7	2	11
South	9	33	28	10	5	15
West	6	28	37	13	6	10

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

Respondents continue to give schools in their own communities higher grades than they give the public schools nationally. In 1985, 27% of the public gave the public schools nationally a grade of A or B — the highest percentage since this question was first asked in 1974. However, the 1985 figure is statistically equal to the 25% who gave the public schools nationally a grade of A or B last year.

The question:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A	3	4	4	1
B	24	22	28	22
C	43	43	42	47
D	12	11	14	19
FAIL	3	3	2	6
Don't know	15	17	10	5

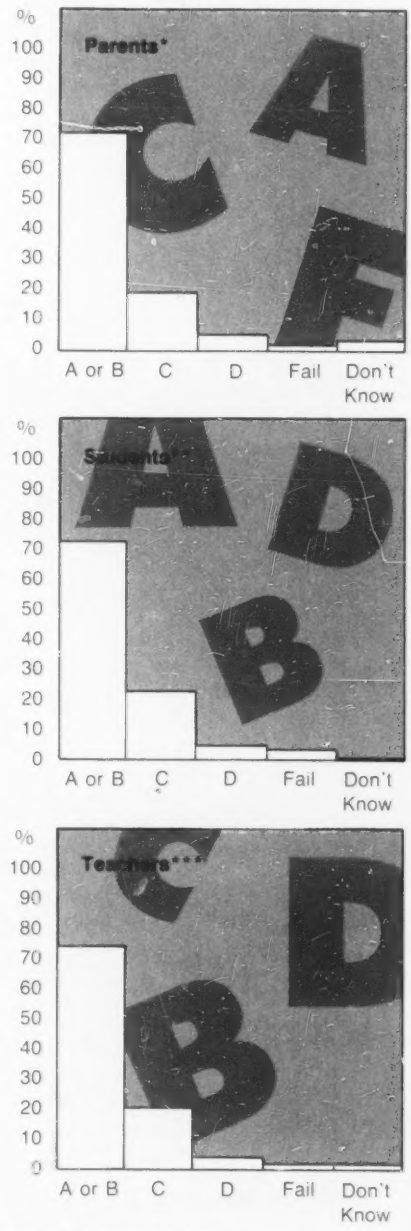
NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %
A	3	2	2	2	2
B	24	23	17	20	18
C	43	49	38	44	43
D	12	11	16	15	15
FAIL	3	4	6	4	6
Don't know	15	11	21	15	16

Rating of Public Schools Their Children Attend

When parents are asked to rate the schools their own children attend — the schools with which they are presumably most familiar — the grades they assign are appreciably higher. Almost three-quarters (71%) of the parents give their children's schools a grade of A or B. Nineteen percent assign a grade of C, and only 7% assign a grade of D or FAIL.

When their children are performing at an above-average academic level, 84% of the parents give their children's schools a grade of A or B. Even among parents of average or below-average students, 60% give their children's schools an A or a B.

How Parents, Students, and Teachers Grade Their Own Schools



*Based on school oldest child attends

**Gallup Youth Survey, 1985

***PDK/Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, 1984

The question:

Using the A, B, C, D, and FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

Public School Parents	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**23**	**48**	**19**	**5**	**2**	**3**
Education						
College	22	54	15	3	1	5
High school	23	44	22	7	3	1
Occupation						
White collar	26	56	9	4	2	3
Blue collar	23	41	25	7	2	2
Oldest Child Attends						
High school	24	45	22	7	1	1
Elementary school	23	52	18	4	3	*
Oldest Child's Class Standing						
Above average	33	51	13	2	1	*
Average or below	13	47	28	9	3	*

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Rating of Teachers in the Local Public Schools

Almost half of all respondents (49%) gave teachers in the local public schools a grade of A or B in 1985. This percentage is statistically equal to the 50% of respondents who gave teachers in the local schools a grade of A or B last year — and up considerably from 1981, when only 39% of respondents did so.

Parents of children in the public schools were more likely to award grades of A or B to teachers (58%) than were respondents with no children in school (47%).

The question:

Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A	12	13	12	8
B	37	34	46	33
C	26	24	31	29
D	7	7	5	15
FAIL	3	3	4	4
Don't know	15	19	2	11

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1984 %	1981 %
A	12	13	11
B	37	37	28
C	26	31	31
D	7	7	9
FAIL	3	3	6
Don't know	15	9	15

Rating of Principals and Administrators in the Local Public Schools

The grades given school principals and other administrators are similar to those given teachers. Almost half (48%) of all respondents gave principals and other administrators grades of A or B. Once again, respondents with children in the public schools were more likely to award above-average grades to principals and other administrators (56%) than were respondents with no children in school (45%).

The question:

Now, what grade would you give the principals and administrators in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A	14	14	16	6
B	34	31	40	32
C	25	23	27	31
D	9	9	10	19
FAIL	4	4	4	5
Don't know	14	19	3	7

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1984 %	1981 %
A	14	13	10
B	34	34	26
C	25	29	28
D	9	8	12
FAIL	4	5	9
Don't know	14	11	15

Rating of Teachers and Principals In the Schools Their Children Attend

When parents are referring specifically to the schools their own children attend, fully 68% give the teachers a grade of A or B, and 69% say that the performance of principals and administrators deserves a grade of A or B.

Among parents whose children are above average in academic attainment, eight in 10 would give their children's teachers a grade of A or B, and 77% would give administrative personnel a grade of A or B.

The questions:

Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the teachers in the school your oldest child attends?

Public School Parents	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**22**	**46**	**21**	**5**	**2**	**4**
Education						
College	24	48	17	4	1	6
High school	18	46	25	5	3	3
Occupation						
White collar	21	53	17	2	1	6
Blue collar	24	40	25	6	3	2
Oldest Child Attends						
High school	16	46	26	7	3	2
Elementary school	25	48	20	3	2	2
Oldest Child's Class Standing						
Above average	29	51	16	3	*	1
Average or below	14	42	29	7	5	3

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Using the A, B, C, D, FAIL scale again, what grade would you give the principals and administrators in the school your oldest child attends?

Public School Parents	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
TOTAL	**23**	**46**	**19**	**4**	**4**	**4**
Education						
College	24	41	22	4	2	7
High school	22	49	15	4	7	3
Occupation						
White collar	27	45	14	4	3	7
Blue collar	23	43	20	5	6	3
Oldest Child Attends						
High school	20	48	18	5	7	2
Elementary school	25	46	20	4	3	2
Oldest Child's Class Standing						
Above average	32	45	16	4	2	1
Average or below	13	49	22	5	8	3

Teachers' Salaries in This Community

Again this year the U.S. public tends to feel that public school teachers are underpaid. In 1985 about four Americans in 10 (43%) feel that teachers' salaries are about right, but only 6% say that they are too high, whereas 33% say that they are too low.

This pattern of responses is virtually the same as those found in previous surveys on the subject. Many more Americans believe that teachers are underpaid than believe that they are overpaid. Interestingly, this view is held by those who do not have children enrolled in the public schools, as well as by those who do.

Not surprisingly, teachers' attitudes regarding teacher salaries are more one-sided than the public's attitudes on that topic. In the 1984 Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, only 9% of the teachers surveyed felt that their pay was about right, while 90% deemed it too low and less than 1% said that it was too high (see the October 1984 *Kappan*, p. 102).

The question:

Do you think salaries in this community for teachers are too high, too low, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too high	6	5	7	5
Too low	33	30	38	42
Just about right	43	44	42	37
No opinion	18	21	13	16

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1969 %
Too high	6	7	8	10	2
Too low	33	37	35	29	33
Just about right	43	41	31	41	43
No opinion	18	15	26	20	22

Attitudes Toward Merit Pay Programs

Six Americans in 10 favor merit pay for teachers — about the same proportion as in 1984, when 65% supported the idea. Surprisingly, respondents with no children in school favor merit pay for teachers by almost as large a percentage as do public school parents.

According to the 1984 Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, teachers' views on merit pay are almost exactly the reverse of the public's views (see the October 1984 *Kappan*, p. 103). While the public supports merit pay for teachers by a ratio of more than 2-1, teachers oppose the idea by a ratio of exactly 2-1 (64% to 32%).

The question:

How do you, yourself, feel about the idea of merit pay for teachers? In general, do you favor or oppose it?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	60	59	62	69
Oppose	24	23	25	21
No opinion	16	18	13	10

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1984 %
Favor	60	65
Oppose	24	22
No opinion	16	13

Attitudes Toward Competency Testing of Teachers

Almost universally, the American public supports the use of basic competency tests to measure teachers' knowledge and intellectual ability. In the population as a whole and in every subgroup surveyed, about nine respondents in 10 favor such testing.

The question:

Before they are hired by a school district, do you feel all teachers should or should not be required to pass a basic competency test to measure such things as their general knowledge and ability to think?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	89	88	89	92
Should not	6	6	7	5
Don't know	5	6	4	3

Subjects the Public Would Require

As has been the case in previous surveys, mathematics and English once again head the list of subjects that the public would require of all high school students. For students who plan to attend college, 91% of the respondents mentioned mathematics as a requirement, and 88% mentioned English. For *non*-college-bound students, 85% of the public would require mathematics, and 81% would require English.

For the college-bound, a large majority of respondents would also require history/U.S. government (76%), science (76%), and computer training (71%). A smaller number, but still a majority, would require business (59%), career education (57%), and foreign language (53%) as well.

The public is less inclined to require history/U.S. government (61%), science (51%), and computer training (57%) of

students who do not plan to attend college — though a majority still favor doing so. The public tends as often to favor business and career education coursework for the non-college-bound as for those who plan to attend college.

The clear third-place choice of subjects, behind mathematics and English, for the non-college-bound is vocational training, favored by 75%. Only 17% think that foreign language should be a requirement for students who do not plan to attend college, however.

The questions:

Would you look over this card, which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every high school student *who plans to go on to college* to take?

What about those public high school students who do *not plan to go to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	Should Be Required	
	For Those Planning To Go to College %	For Those Not Planning to Go To College %
Mathematics	91	85
English	88	81
History/U.S. government	76	61
Science	76	51
Computer training	71	57
Business	59	60
Career education	57	57
Foreign language	53	17
Health education	48	43
Physical education	40	40
Vocational training	27	75
Music	24	15
Art	23	15

	Should Be Required							
	For Those Planning To Go to College				For Those Not Planning to Go To College			
	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1985 %	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %
Mathematics	91	96	92	94	85	92	87	91
English	88	94	88	91	81	90	83	89
History/U.S. government	76	84	78	83	61	71	63	71
Science	76	84	76	76	51	61	53	58
Computer training	71	*	*	*	57	*	*	*
Business	59	68	55	60	60	76	65	75
Career education	57	*	*	*	57	*	*	*
Foreign language	53	57	50	54	17	19	19	21
Health education	48	52	43	47	43	50	42	46
Physical education	40	43	41	44	40	44	40	43
Vocational training	27	37	32	34	75	83	74	64
Music	24	22	18	26	15	18	16	20
Art	23	24	19	28	15	18	16	20

*These subjects were not included in earlier surveys.

Sex Education

The 1985 findings show an increase in support for sex education in both the elementary school and the high school since the last survey on the subject, conducted in 1981. In 1981, 70% supported including sex education in the high school curriculum, and 45% favored sex education for elementary school students. Today, the comparable figures are 75% for high school and 52% for elementary school.

The questions:

Do you feel the public high schools should or should not include sex education in their instructional program?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	75	72	81	80
Should not	19	21	16	15
Don't know	6	7	3	5

Do you feel the public elementary schools should or should not include sex education in grades 4 through 8?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	52	50	54	64
Should not	43	43	43	31
Don't know	5	7	3	5

	Sex Education			
	In High School		In Elementary School	
	1985 %	1981 %	1985 %	1981 %
Should include	75	70	52	45
Should not include	19	22	43	48
Don't know	6	8	5	7

Topics to Be Covered in Sex Education

When those respondents who support the idea of sex education are asked to indicate which topics should be covered, large differences emerge between the topics deemed acceptable for high school and those deemed acceptable for the elementary classroom. The sole exception is the biology of reproduction, which more than eight Americans in 10 feel should be covered at both levels.

More than 80% of the respondents favor covering the topics of venereal disease and birth control at the high school level, but slightly less than 50% feel that these topics should be included in the elementary sex education curriculum. About six Americans in 10 favor discussing premarital sex, the nature of sexual intercourse, and abortion at the high school level. At the elementary level, inclusion of those topics is favored by only 34%, 45%, and 28% respectively.

Parents of children enrolled in the public schools do not differ significantly from respondents who do not have children in school when it comes to the specific topics that they think should be covered in sex education courses. Parents who send their children to nonpublic schools tend to be somewhat more liberal on this score than either of the other two groups of respondents.

The question:

Which of the following topics, if any, listed on this card should be included in high school? In elementary school?

Should Be Included In High School	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Birth control	85	85	83	88
Venereal disease	84	85	81	89

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Biology of reproduction	82	82	79	90
Premarital sex	62	63	59	69
Nature of sexual intercourse	61	62	57	73
Abortion	60	61	57	68
Homosexuality	48	48	45	62

Should Be Included In Elementary School	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Biology of reproduction	89	87	91	99
Venereal disease	49	50	45	60
Birth control	48	49	44	51
Nature of sexual intercourse	45	48	37	54
Premarital sex	34	35	28	48
Abortion	28	28	26	42
Homosexuality	28	29	22	41

	Topics That Should Be Included			
	In High School		In Elementary School	
	1985 %	1981 %	1985 %	1981 %
Birth control	85	79	48	45
Venereal disease	84	84	49	52
Biology of reproduction	82	77	89	83
Premarital sex	62	60	34	40
Nature of sexual intercourse	61	53	45	36
Abortion	60	54	28	26
Homosexuality	48	45	28	33

Importance of Extracurricular Activities

About eight Americans in 10 feel that extracurricular activities are important to a young person's education — roughly the same percentage as in the two previous surveys (1984 and 1978) that dealt with this topic. Of the 80% in 1985 who say that extracurricular activities are important, 39% deem them "very" important, and 41% deem them "fairly" important.

The question:

I'd like your opinion about extracurricular activities such as the school band, dramatics, sports, and the school newspaper. How important are these to a young person's education — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	39	37	44	57
Fairly important	41	43	37	31
Not too important	14	14	16	10
Not at all important	3	3	2	2
No opinion	3	3	1	*

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1984 %	1978 %
Very important	39	31	45
Fairly important	41	46	40
Not too important	14	18	9
Not at all important	3	4	4
No opinion	3	1	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Standards for Participation In Extracurricular Activities

Americans are virtually unanimous in supporting a requirement that students who participate in extracurricular activities maintain passing grades and acceptable school attendance records. Nine respondents in 10 in every population subgroup approve of this idea.

The question:

Do you feel that high school students who participate in sports and extracurricular activities should or should not be required to maintain a minimum grade-point average and school attendance record?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should be required	91	90	91	97
Should not be required	6	6	7	1
Don't know	3	4	2	2

Attitudes Toward Coeducational Sports

Americans are increasingly receptive to the idea of coeducational athletic teams in U.S. public high schools. Since the last time the question was asked, in 1976, the public has become increasingly favorable to the idea of girls and boys playing on the same teams in virtually every sport.

This increasingly favorable attitude prevails for such noncontact sports as tennis and track, such "semi-contact" sports as basketball and baseball, and such heavy contact sports as football and wrestling. About eight Americans in 10 do not object to coeducational teams in the noncontact sports of tennis and swimming; seven Americans in 10 do not object to coeducational teams in track. Almost half of all Americans think that girls should be allowed to play on high school baseball and basketball teams with boys. About one American in six favors allowing girls to play on high school football teams with boys, and about one American in 10 feels that wrestling teams should be coeducational.

For all sports covered by the survey, 18- to 29-year-olds proved more likely than older respondents to favor coeducational teams. Findings from the 1985 Gallup Youth Survey, which samples U.S. 13- to 18-year-olds, also suggest that younger Americans are the group most likely to favor coeducational teams.

The question:

Do you think high school boys and girls should or should not be allowed to play on the same school teams in the following sports?

Should Be Allowed	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Tennis	85	84	87	89
Swimming	79	78	80	81
Track	68	67	69	76
Baseball	48	47	49	57
Basketball	40	40	39	48
Football	16	16	14	15
Wrestling	11	12	8	10

Further breakdowns:

Should Be Allowed	U.S. Public %	13- to 18-Year-Olds* %
Tennis	85	95
Swimming	79	88
Track	68	86
Baseball	48	49
Basketball	40	43
Football	16	21
Wrestling	11	16

*Findings from the Gallup Youth Survey, April 1985.

Attitudes Toward Homework

In 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended that public school students be assigned far more homework than they were currently given. Our 1985 survey shows the public roughly divided on that recommendation in the case of elementary students, with 40% in favor and 38% opposed. The public supports increased homework for high school students by a ratio of almost 5-3, however, with 47% in favor and 31% opposed.

Parents of children enrolled in the public schools are about as likely as those who have no children in school to favor more homework. However, parents whose children receive average or below-average grades are somewhat more likely to favor increased homework — both in elementary school and in high school — than are parents whose children's academic performance is above average.

Nonwhites are more likely than whites — by margins of 67% to 45% at the high school level and 66% to 36% at the elementary school level — to favor increased homework. Residents of inner cities and people living in the western U.S. are also more likely than other population subgroups to support increased homework.

The questions:

Do you think elementary school children in the public schools here should be assigned more homework or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should be	40	37	45	53
Should not be	38	35	48	22
Don't know	22	28	7	25

Do you think high school students in the public schools here should be assigned more homework or not?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should be	47	46	49	60
Should not be	31	29	37	19
Don't know	22	25	14	21

Time Spent on Homework And on Televiewing

About six public school parents in 10 (61%) require that their children devote a minimum amount of time to homework on school nights. These parents require an average of one hour and 25 minutes of homework nightly.

By contrast, only about five public school parents in 10 (49%) limit the amount of time their children can spend watching television on school nights. These parents allow their children to spend an average of one hour and 50 minutes nightly on this activity.

Interestingly, parents' socioeconomic backgrounds and their children's levels of academic achievement bear little relationship to the requirements that parents set with regard to children's homework and televiewing. Parents who have attended college, who hold white-collar jobs, or whose children are above-average students are no more likely than other subgroups to require a minimum amount of homework or to establish a maximum amount of time for children's televiewing.

The questions:

Do you require that your oldest child spend a minimum amount of time on homework during the school week?

Do you place a definite limit on the amount of time your child spends viewing television during the school week?

Public School Parents	Minimum Time For Homework %	Maximum Time For Television %
Yes	61	49
No	36	46
Undesignated	3	5

Biggest Problems Facing the Public Schools in 1985

The U.S. public continues to regard discipline as the most important problem facing the public schools. This has been true in every poll but one since this series began in 1969.

One-quarter of all citizens polled named "discipline" the biggest problem facing the public schools, roughly the same percentage as in previous polls. The next most frequently mentioned problem was "use of drugs," a discipline-related area mentioned by 18% of the public in this year's poll. The most frequently cited problem that pertains to the quality of schooling is "poor curriculum/poor standards," mentioned by 11% of the public. The only other responses mentioned by more than 5% of the public are "difficulty in getting good teachers" and "lack of proper financial support," mentioned by 10% and 9% of the public respectively.

The question:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Lack of discipline	25	23	25	43
Use of drugs	18	18	20	11
Poor curriculum/poor standards	11	11	11	10
Difficulty in getting good teachers	10	10	12	12
Lack of proper financial support	9	9	9	8
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	5	6	4	3
Large schools/overcrowding	5	4	7	7

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Integration/busing	4	5	2	*
Teachers' lack of interest	4	3	6	8
Drinking/alcoholism	3	3	2	5
Parents' lack of interest	3	3	3	6
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	3	2	1
Mismanagement of funds/programs	2	2	4	5
Low teacher pay	2	1	2	4
Moral standards	2	2	1	2
Lack of needed teachers	2	1	3	1
Communication problems	2	1	3	1
Crime/vandalism	2	1	2	*
Lack of proper facilities	1	1	1	1
Problems with administration	1	*	1	1
School board policies	1	1	1	*
Government interference	1	1	*	1
Teacher strikes	1	1	*	1
Parental involvement in school activities	1	1	1	1
Too many schools/declining enrollment	1	1	1	1
Transportation	1	1	1	*
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	1	1
Fighting	1	1	2	*
There are no problems	2	1	4	*
Miscellaneous	4	3	5	10
Don't know	14	19	4	4

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.

Rights and Privileges of Public School Students

By a margin of more than 3-1 (40% to 12%), the U.S. public feels that local public school students have too many rights and privileges rather than not enough. One-fourth of the public feels that students have about the right amount of privileges.

This relationship has remained fairly stable since 1975, when the question was last asked. However, the 1985 findings differ substantially from those of the 1972 survey. At that time, almost as large a percentage of the public felt that students did not have enough rights as felt that they had too many.

The question:

Generally speaking, do the local public school students in this community have too many rights and privileges, or not enough?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too many	40	38	42	55
Not enough	12	12	13	5
Just about right	25	23	35	22
No opinion	23	27	10	18

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1975 %	1972 %
Too many	40	45	41
Not enough	12	10	11
Just about right	25	27	33
No opinion	23	18	15

Rights of Public School Authorities To Examine Student Property

By a 4-1 margin (78% to 18%), the public supports the right of school authorities to open students' lockers or to examine their personal property for contraband — drugs, liquor, or stolen property. Recently, this controversy has arisen in a number of communities. Parents are even more in favor of granting this authority to the schools than are nonparents.

The question:

Do you feel that teachers or school authorities should or should not be allowed to open students' lockers or examine personal property if they suspect drugs, liquor, or stolen goods are hidden there?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	78	76	84	89
Should not	18	19	15	10
Don't know	4	5	1	1

Preferred Solutions To Discipline Problems

When Americans are asked to choose the solutions they prefer from a list of suggested ways to solve discipline problems, they tend to choose the least harsh measures.

The public responds most favorably to those solutions that involve discussion and instruction, for both teachers and parents. The most frequently chosen solutions were "classes for teachers on how to deal with problem children," chosen by 64% of the public; "discussion groups with parents of problem children," chosen by 62% of the public; and "required classes for parents of problem children," chosen by 50% of the public.

The next most popular solutions would deal with problem students *within* the school system, by suspending students who exhibit extreme behavior problems (46%), by forming special classes (45%), or by creating work-study programs in which students attend school half-time and work half-time (44%).

Forty-two percent of the public would favor beefing up the court system, the probation system, and work programs for delinquent youths. Only 21% of the public would favor establishing alternative schools for students with discipline problems.

The question:

Lack of discipline is often cited as a problem confronting the public schools. Please look over this list and tell me which of these possible solutions you think would be most helpful in improving school discipline.

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Classes for teachers on how to deal with problem children	64	62	67	73

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Discussion groups with parents of problem children	62	61	66	71
Required classes for parents of problem children	50	50	51	59
Suspension of students with extreme behavior problems	46	44	50	50
Formation of special classes for students who have behavior problems	45	45	43	43
Creation of a system of work-study programs, with problem children doing useful work half-time and attending school half-time	44	44	43	53
Classes for administrators to help them create more orderly behavior	43	43	43	48
Tougher courts, probation systems, and work programs for delinquents	42	41	44	52
Creation of a curriculum more relevant to the interests and concerns of students	32	31	34	31
Alternative schools	21	21	20	25

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Caring for Preschool and Latchkey Children

Americans were asked whether or not they favored two proposals that would involve the public schools in an almost custodial role. The first proposal would make tax-supported child-care centers available for preschool children. The second would extend the school day for latchkey children — children whose parents get home after the conclusion of the school day.

The public is about evenly divided on both proposals. Forty-three percent of the public favor the provision of tax-supported child care for preschoolers; 45% are opposed. Virtually the same split was recorded when this proposal was tested in 1981 and in 1976.

Forty-three percent of the public favor and 46% oppose the proposal to provide extended school hours for latchkey children. Paradoxically, parents of public school children are only slightly more in favor of both proposals than are people with no children in the public schools.

The questions:

A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	43	42	47	44
Oppose	45	44	47	50
Don't know	12	14	6	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1981 %	1976 %
Favor	43	46	46
Oppose	45	47	49
Don't know	12	7	5

A proposal has been made to extend the school day for so-called latchkey children, that is, children whose parents are still at work when the children get home from school. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	43	42	46	53
Oppose	46	45	48	41
Don't know	11	13	6	6

Financing the Public Schools

The U.S. public opposes raising taxes for local public schools by a margin of roughly 5-4. In previous surveys, the public has always opposed raising taxes for the local schools, though in 1969 the split was almost even (45% in favor, 49% opposed). The opposition to increased taxes reached its highest level in 1981, at the height of the property tax revolt, when the public opposed raising taxes to support the public schools by a margin of 2-1.

The question:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
For raise in taxes	38	35	46	37
Against raise in taxes	52	53	47	52
No opinion	10	12	7	11

Financial Support of the Public Schools

NATIONAL RESULTS	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
1985 survey	38	52	10
1984 survey	41	47	12
1983 survey	39	52	9
1981 survey	30	60	10
1972 survey	36	56	8
1971 survey	40	52	8
1970 survey	37	56	7
1969 survey	45	49	6

Support for Special Programs

The public attitude toward spending public school funds for special programs has changed substantially since 1982. In 1982 the public opposed by a narrow margin (48% to 42%) spending additional funds for special programs for children with learning problems. In that same year the public

strongly opposed (64% to 19%) spending additional funds on programs for gifted and talented students.

Just three years later, however, the public favors additional spending for those with learning problems by a margin of 51% to 40%. Although the public remains opposed to increased spending for the gifted and talented, public support for increased spending in this area has risen from 19% to 30%.

The questions:

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for students with learning problems? Do you feel that more public school funds should be spent on students with learning problems than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More spent	51	52	50	49
Same amount spent	40	38	44	43
Less spent	2	2	2	1
Don't know	7	8	4	7

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1982 %
More spent	51	42
Same amount spent	40	48
Less spent	2	4
Don't know	7	6

How do you feel about the spending of public school funds for special instruction and homework programs for gifted and talented students? Do you feel that more school funds should be spent on gifted and talented students than on average students — or the same amount?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
More spent	30	30	32	36
Same amount spent	58	58	58	56
Less spent	5	5	5	3
Don't know	7	7	5	5

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1982 %
More spent	30	19
Same amount spent	58	64
Less spent	5	11
Don't know	7	6

Private and Church-Related Schools

The U.S. public feels that the recent increase in the number of nonpublic (private and church-related) schools is good for the nation. The public approves the increase by a 2-1 ratio (55% to 27%), a slightly higher margin of approval than in 1981, the last time this question was asked.

The question:

In recent years, the number of nonpublic schools, that is, private and church-related schools, has increased in many parts of the country. In general, do you think this increase in nonpublic schools is a good thing or a bad thing for the nation?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Good thing	55	54	56	71
Bad thing	27	27	28	21
No opinion	18	19	16	8

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1981 %
Good thing	55	49
Bad thing	27	30
No opinion	18	21

The September *Kappan* report of the 17th poll of attitudes toward education had to be cut severely. Readers who would like a copy of the full 126-page report can obtain it by writing me in care of Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402, enclosing $7.50.

In view of increasing costs for a college education and reduced federal funds for student grants and loans, the answers to four questions omitted from the September *Kappan* may be of sufficient interest to report here.

1. All respondents were asked, "What do you feel are the chief advantages of a college education, if any?" The national totals: job opportunities/better jobs, 52%; higher income, 18%; more knowledge, 14%; preparation for life, 13%; opens doors/provides opportunities, 10%; specialized training, 10%; maturation, 6%; higher social level/status, 6%; exposure to new experiences/ideas, 6%; teaches person to think/learn, 3%; no advantages 4%; miscellaneous and don't know, 4%.

2. Parents of public school children were asked: "Would you like to have your oldest child go on to college after graduating from high school?" The response: yes, 88%; no, 5%; don't know, 7%.

3. These parents were then asked, "Do you think he/she will go to college?" The response: yes, 66%; no, 17%; don't know, 17%. Persons with a college education or white-collar occupation were much more likely to say yes than those with only a high school education or blue-collar job. If the oldest child had above-average class standing, parents were twice as likely to answer yes.

4. Finally, parents of public school children were asked, "How difficult will it be to pay for your child's college education?" Seventy-seven percent said either very difficult or fairly difficult (very difficult, 40%; fairly difficult, 37%). Only 15% said not very difficult, and 6% said not difficult at all. Two percent didn't know. — Stanley Elam, PDK Poll Coordinator.

Illustration by Leslie Cober

Home Schools

Although the U.S. public views private and church-related schools in an increasingly favorable light, the same cannot be said of home schooling. Only 16% of the public think that the movement toward home schooling is good for the nation; 73% view this trend as a bad thing.

The question:

Recently there has been a movement toward "home schools," that is, schools where parents keep their children at home and teach the children themselves. In general, do you think this movement is a good thing or a bad thing for the nation?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Good thing	16	16	14	22
Bad thing	73	72	75	71
Don't know	11	12	11	7

Standards for Nonpublic And Home Schools

Large majorities of the U.S. public would require both the private and church-related schools and the home schools to meet the same standards for accreditation and teacher certification as the nation's public schools must meet. Ninety percent of the public would require the same standards for private and church-related schools as for public schools, and 82% would favor the same requirements for home schools.

It is interesting that *nonpublic school parents* are as much in favor of requiring the same standards for private and church-related schools and for home schools as are the general public and the parents of public school children.

The questions:

Do you think that the nonpublic schools should or should not be required to meet the same teacher certification and accrediting standards as the public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	90	90	91	91
Should not	6	6	6	8
Don't know	4	4	3	1

Do you think that the "home schools" should or should not be required to meet the same teacher certification standards as the public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Should	82	81	84	87
Should not	10	10	11	9
Don't know	8	9	5	4

Support for Vouchers

Today the U.S. public supports the adoption of a voucher system by a narrow margin (45% to 40%). This represents a slight decline from the peak of approval for vouchers in 1983, when 51% of the public favored a voucher plan and only 38% opposed it.

The question:

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his education. The parents can send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	45	42	49	63
Oppose	40	40	41	32
No opinion	15	18	10	5

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1983 %	1981 %	1971 %	1970 %
Favor	45	51	43	38	43
Oppose	40	38	41	44	46
No opinion	15	11	16	18	11

Importance of a College Education

The percentage of the U.S. public that views a college education as important continues to increase. In the current survey nine Americans in 10 (91%) say that they feel that a college education is very important or fairly important. Nonparents are as likely to feel that a college education is important as are parents of public school children.

The question:

How important is a college education today — very important, fairly important, or not too important?

"We spent a lot of money educating him, so if you want Junior's opinion, you'll have to pay for it."

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very important	64	64	66	64
Fairly important	27	27	24	29
Not too important	7	7	9	7
Don't know	2	2	1	*

NATIONAL TOTALS	1985 %	1983 %	1978 %
Very important	64	58	36
Fairly important	27	31	46
Not too important	7	8	16
Don't know	2	3	2

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,528 adults (18 years of age and older). It is described as a modified probability sample of the United States. Personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in all areas of the nation and in all types of communities. A description of the sample is available from Phi Delta Kappa.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was carried out during the period of 17-26 May 1985.

The Report. The heading "Nonpublic School Parents" includes parents of students who attend parochial schools and parents of students who attend private or independent schools.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for small groups in which relatively few respondents were interviewed, e.g., nonpublic school parents.

The findings of this report apply only to the U.S. as a whole and not to individual communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local areas compare with national norms.

Acknowledgments

Eighty-five members and officers of Phi Delta Kappa suggested questions and topics for this year's PDK/Gallup education poll. These suggestions were examined and rated by a panel of distinguished educators before submission to Alec Gallup, who framed the final set of questions.

The poll panel this year was composed of Ben Brodinsky, education consultant; Anne Campbell, education consultant; Emeral Crosby, principal, Northern High School, Detroit, Mich.; Susan Glass, director of public relations, United Federation of Teachers; Bill Honig, superintendent of public instruction, State of California; K. Forbis Jordan, senior specialist in education, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress; C. Peter Magrath, president, University of Missouri System; Diane Ravitch, professor of history and education, Teachers College, Columbia University; Sharon P. Robinson, director, Division of Instruction and Professional Development, National Education Association; Carole S. Seffrin, assistant superintendent, Metropolitan School District of Martinsville, Ind.; M. Donald Thomas, deputy superintendent, Division of Public Accountability, South Carolina Department of Education; and Edward A. Wynne, professor of education, University of Illinois at Chicago.

PDK members suggesting questions for the poll were: Leodies U. Arburtha, Janet Arena, Douglas Bedient, Wayne Boshears, Douglas A. Boyer, Anita F. Briggs, George Brower, Charles A. Brown, Steven M. Brown, Norma Bryant, Bob N. Cage, Patrick W. Carlton, Dennis R. Chamberlain, Janice L. Chappell, Sonja Clary, George W. Crane, Louis Della Barea, Peggy M. Doss, Daniel Drake, William E. Dugger, Jr., Don Duncan, Fred Dundas, Walt Dunne, J. Hugh Dwyer, Cleo Edeburn, Mark D. Engelhardt, Alice Fessenden, J. Leo Freiwald, John T. Glore, Helen L. Harriger, Lester W. Harvey, Fred Hattabaugh, John E. Hess, John Hillison, Veryle E. Homuth, Deena Horst, James Hutcheson, Ron Joekel, R.E. Johnson, Roger H. Jones, George Kersey, Jr., Sandra Koczwara, Jerome G. Kopp, Edward Krojansky, Evalee Lasater, Bob Leiferman, Robert Lepse, Nancy M. Livingston, Barbara Ludlow, Vernon D. Luft, Robert L. Mauller, Thomas C. McCullough, Donald F. McDermott, Ed Meadows, S.S. Moorty, Howard Mustian, Jr., Robert F. Nicely, Jr., Carol O'Connell, Ronald L. Peterson, Jeri Pfeifer, Judith Ramirez, Bill Reedy, Hal Riddle, James M. Schneider, Lawrence J. Schweinhart, Philip D. Selim, Pat Severson, Elizabeth D. Shoeman, Daniel L. Shull, Edward G. Simmons, Michael J. Stolee, Anita Stone, Gerald Sughroue, Margo P. Tech, George Thomas, Lloyd R. Thompson, Rodney W. Tulloch, Jacki Vallentine-Yardley, J.G. Walden, Stephen P. Wareham, Alfred Weingart, Wayne H. White, M.E. Wolf, Terry L. Wolfenden, and Gayle Woolley. — *Stanley M. Elam*, coordinator, Gallup-Phi Delta Kappa Education Poll.

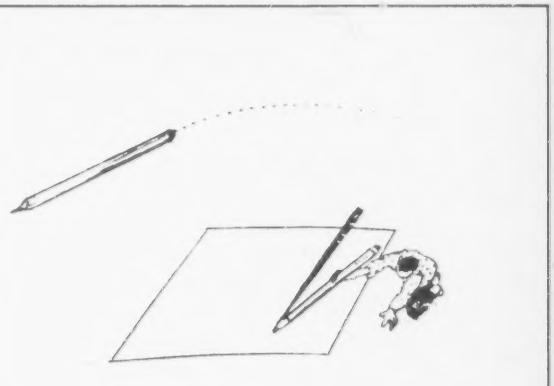


Illustration by Leslie Cober

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Phi Delta Kappa has published a 15-year (1969-1984) compilation of the Gallup polls on education. In this volume the poll questions are arranged topically rather than chronologically, making it easier to look up poll results on specific topics. *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1984: A Topical Summary* can be ordered for $6 each ($5 for PDK members).

Orders for reprints or for the book should be addressed to Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. Ph. 812/339-1156.